

HAY RIVER, N.W.T.  
Statistical Outline

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5293

POLARPAM



HAY RIVER, N.W.T. - Statistical Outline

LOCATION: 60°51' N 115°43' W

about 540 feet above sea level  
on shore of Great Slave Lake and at mouth of  
Hay River on island in the delta  
380 miles north of Grimshaw, Alberta.

POPULATION: 2,002 (1966 - DBS)  
1,500 (1959 estimate)

<u>CLIMATE:</u>	<u>Jan.</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Yearly</u>
mean temp.	-10°F to -20°F	70°F	
mean rainfall			12 in.
mean snowfall			50 in.
mean frost-free days per year,	80		
mean days per year of snow cover,	160 to 200		
length of growing season per year,	120 to 140 days		
Synoptic Weather Reporting Station at Hay River			

ACCESS:  
Road - On Mackenzie Highway, Hay River Highway from  
Enterprise to Hay River  
Water - Good Harbour - tug & barge transportation up  
Mackenzie River system  
Air - First class air strip

MEDICAL: hospital - 8 beds (in 1959)  
one doctor

EDUCATIONAL  
FACILITIES: one school



## HAY RIVER

Twenty years ago, the population of Hay River did not exceed 200. It was a community made up of the predictable Hudson's Bay Company trading post, a 19th century Anglican mission and the Indians who trapped and fished in the area. The completion of the Mackenzie Highway through to the town brought rapid changes: the community was suddenly the centre of surface transportation in the District of Mackenzie.

The Yellowknife Transportation Company provides one of the main economic supports of the town. In 1946, their first year of operations, they moved 5,500 tons of freight. In 1959 the tonnage hauled during the 4 month season was increased to almost 50,000. The company operates 6 tugs and 20 barges. One of the recent tugs, the "Husky" was built first in Edmonton, then stripped and shipped to Hay River where it was rebuilt. Hay River is the main base of operation of the tugs and barges that form the life-line of the Mackenzie River System. A radio-telephone network covers all bases from Edmonton to the Arctic Ocean. The Prudhoe Bay discovery doubled in one year the tonnage shipped from Hay River. This is resulting in new dockage and yard facilities being built.

The second fact of economic importance for the Hay River community is the abundance of trout and whitefish in Great Slave Lake that allows for thriving, year-round fishing. The area is sometimes nicknamed the "Chicago Fish Market" since most of the catch is sent to Chicago. There are nearly 100 fishing boats operating on Great Slave Lake, with 12 floating packers, equipped to dress and ice the smaller boats' catches for days at a time. The Department of Fisheries maintains a control of the fish population, although there is no apparent danger of their decrease - if this became the case, the fleet could be directed to the multitude of as yet "unharvested" lakes. In winter, fish cabins are set up far from Hay River, holes are chopped in the ice, and nets let down. "Bombardiers" carry supplies out to the fishermen who may stay for weeks, and transport their catch back to Hay River for export.

The community now includes the bulk oil stations of four major oil companies, and seven fish companies. The town also has a modern 10-room hotel and a motel.

One of the greatest needs of the fishing industry is a large co-operative cold storage plant for native fishermen who have no refrigeration facilities of their own.

One constant problem faced by the community is the danger of spring floods. Only 25 feet above lake level, the town has been inundated by the river flood waters. A bulldozer path and even dynamite are now used in springtime to keep the water flowing freely.

Another problem is permafrost which is continuous, just below the surface. The Mayor, Mr. Don Stewart has experimented by building his home on steel pilings, sunk 52 feet through permafrost to bedrock. The more common procedure is to drive posts into the permafrost, allow it to freeze around them, then saw the posts off evenly. One of the reasons for raising the buildings off the ground is that the heat of any building in contact with the ground would melt the top layer of the permafrost, causing foundations to heave.



January 4, 1969

## Arctic oil brings boom

# Hay River set for new rush

Special to The Globe and Mail

**HAY RIVER, N.W.T. —** After last summer's oil rush to the North, Hay River, the inland port of the Northwest Territories, could be expected to rest so as to prepare itself for the new onslaught at the spring breakup and opening of the Mackenzie River in June.

But even in the middle of winter, it is a bustling community of 3,000, gripped with planning fever and ready to profit from moving equipment anywhere in wake of oil exploration.

Until recently, the mile-wide river highway was the only route to the Delta region and the Arctic coasts of Alaska and Canada. Now, with the arrival of a Hercules transport, Hay River is set to become the staging post for both air and waterborne transportation into the Arctic.

Northern Transportation Ltd. of Edmonton, with its fleet of barges and tugs, pioneered shipping in the region, moving rigs, vehicles and complete houses that arrived at the northern railhead.

The river opens and freezes in stages, giving 50 days or so of free navigation to Prudhoe Bay and 60 to 75 days in the summer to intermediate stops like Norman Wells, the only N.W.T. producing oil field.

According to W. B. Hunter, manager of Northern Transportation, about 206,000 tons of cargo was moved north last summer, compared with 166,000 tons in 1967. The company plans to accommodate about 265,000 tons of cargo this season and projects a volume of 300,000 tons for the following year. Last year, it operated more than two weeks

after the traditional deadline for shipping.

Northern has set aside about \$12-million to re-equip its fleet and to buy additional boats. About \$6-million will be spent on two 4,000-horsepower tugs and 12 barges, and the company is considering the purchase of another power unit and an additional barge, almost doubling the size of the existing fleet.

The rest of the budget will be spent in about two years on a similar quantity of equipment.

"We just hope that there is oil up north," Mr. Hunter said. He also pins his faith on a pipeline running down the valley to bring Arctic oil to southern Canada and the United States. But he admits an alternative route for the pipeline across Alaska would be equally profitable because Northern would be called upon to carry equipment for the project.

Despite newly introduced volume transportation by a Hercules plane operating out of Hay River, 1968 was the company's best shipping season. With more barges, it could have shipped at least five more rigs and assorted loads.

Prefabricated houses for settlements along the river were left on the quay because delivery from manufacturers was delayed.

Dominion Bridge Co. Ltd., the prospective builder of the barges, is looking for a suitable site in the town for a shipyard to construct perhaps half of the barges. Some of these floating platforms will be in the 5,000-ton range, measuring 400 by 200 feet.

"We have to be at least

ahead of demand," Mr. Hunter said to justify the company's plans.

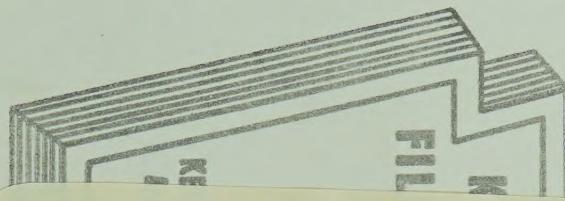
Most of the planning has to be speculative. "Our bookings for the new season at the moment are below last year's levels. Oil companies usually bide their time, waiting for something to develop before rushing in."

Most of the early winter schedule of the Hercules operated by Pacific Western was taken up by charter trips for companies to Norman Wells, Richards Island and other Arctic destinations. Air traffic has increased fivefold this winter, compared with last year.

When the Hercules comes back on station in February, it may be joined by another aircraft equipped with skis to tackle the most remote islands and drilling sites without prepared airports.

Meanwhile, Hay River residents are cashing in on the transportation boom. A company supplying vehicles and charter aircraft to prospecting parties and expediting for oil companies is preparing for increased demand. It sent about 30 motorized transporters across the Territories on lease bases.





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